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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NAIROBI 002578

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DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/21/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER MOPS SO ET

SUBJECT: Somalia - Conversation with President Yusuf

¶1. (C) The Ambassador, at his request, spoke with President Yusuf by phone on June 20 to raise the following: the amnesty, concerns about recent arrests, expansion of the national reconciliation committee, and the desire to have a more extended conversation with Yusuf during his next visit to Nairobi.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador congratulated Yusuf on the amnesty declared for members of the Islamic Courts and others who have opposed the TFG. Yusuf made clear that this was done to bolster prospects for success at the upcoming national reconciliation congress. Yusuf asked that the Ambassador continue to talk with the Hawiye sub-clans, particularly the Ayr, to encourage them to participate in the national reconciliation process. The Ambassador assured him that he would do so.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador expressed grave concerns about reports of numerous arrests taking place in Mogadishu. He specifically called attention to the actions taken against the respected NGO Saacid. Yusuf said that "I am struggling with my cabinet and security people explaining that indiscriminate arrests are counter-productive and telling them that they must only arrest terrorists." He also said that he has told them that processing of those arrested must be completed within 48 hours, as required by Somali law. See para 6 for text of letter the Ambassador sent to Yusuf on June 21 regarding the arrests.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador commended Yusuf for his support to expand the national reconciliation committee to include the Hawiye/Habir Gedir sub-clan. The Ambassador said he understood the paperwork to approve this was on Yusuf's desk and urged that he approve it immediately. Yusuf said that he supports expansion of the committee and that it will take place quickly.

¶5. (C) Yusuf asked that we support PM Gedi's visit to the U.S. Yusuf said that he would welcome an opportunity to talk with the Ambassador at length in Nairobi, but cannot leave Mogadishu until Gedi returns.

¶6. (C) The text of the letter begins as follows:

Quote.

Mr. President:

We welcome your announcement of a 30-day amnesty and pardon of former fighters of the Islamic Courts, and other anti-government fighters and political opponents. Such moves by your government can go a long way to improve the overall environment for reconciliation.

However, we are increasingly concerned about numerous reports we are hearing coming out of Mogadishu on arrests and detentions, including:

--Allegations of literally thousands of people being pulled off the street or from their homes and places of business without explanation or cause being given or known.

--Homes and private compounds being turned into makeshift detention centers.

--The closure, confiscation of property, and detention of staff associated with well-known and respected local organization such as SAACID - which has been promoting peace and improving the lives of women and children since 1990.

--Personal property, such as vehicles and computers, being confiscated from numerous well-respected individuals and their employees.

The above actions not only call into question the meaning of the amnesty just announced, but are severely detrimental to current efforts under way to achieve a national dialogue and political reconciliation that will move the transition process forward. We are aware that some individuals within your administration may have undertaken these actions without your knowledge and with the intention of undermining the fragile dialogue process. We urge you to make clear to officials within your government that this is unacceptable and such heavy-handed tactics will not be tolerated.

On several occasions, you have stressed to me your personal commitment to ensuring the success of the national reconciliation congress and achieving lasting peace in Somalia. As we have stated before, the United States stands

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ready to support these efforts. We will look forward to discussing these issues and others related to the political and reconciliation process during your next visit to Nairobi. End quote.

RANNEBERGER